Spouse Battlemind Training

Helping You and Your Family Prepare for Deployment

Training Timeframe: PRE-DEPLOYMENT

The Nature of Military Life

Military Life is Hard:

- Frequent military deployments
- Frequent training exercises
- Long duty days
- Weekend duty
- Frequent military moves (PCSs)
- Fear of death and/or serious injury
- Distance from extended family
- Financial strain
- Family separations

The Nature of Military Life

Military Life has Benefits:

- Financial stability/Retirement benefits
- Health Care
- Community and sense of belonging
- Education and job training
- Overseas assignments
- Part of a tradition
- Resilient families
- Pride and patriotism

Spouse Battlemind

Spouse Battlemind is the Spouse's ability to face deployments with resilience and strength, allowing easier separations and smoother reunions. Key components include:

- Independence
  - The capability of having a fulfilling and meaningful life as part of an Army Centric Family.
- Resiliency
  - The ability to overcome setbacks and obstacles and to maintain positive thoughts during times of adversity.

Deployments and separations can be a positive growth experience for you and your family. However, some issues may arise that could negatively affect your or your family's well-being.

Battlemind Training for Spouses

Working on this set of Battlemind skills throughout the military deployment cycle will help increase your and your family's resiliency.

Bonds (Social Support)
Adding/Subtracting Family Roles
Taking Control
Talking it Out
Loyalty and Commitment
Emotional Balance
Mental Health and Readiness
Independence
Navigating the Army System
Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

Bonds (Social Support)

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Will often have fellow Soldiers as their primary source of social support.

At Home, Spouses: May develop new friends, strengthen friendships, become more involved in the Army community and participate in new activities. Some Spouses may return home to their families.

Potential Concerns: During a deployment, Spouses and Soldiers will have different sources of social support which can weaken marital relationships. Decreased shared experiences can hinder meaningful communication.

Bonds (Social Support)

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Actions Spouses Can Take: Know that your Soldier can't be your sole source of support while deployed. Develop and maintain a dependable support system. Keep your Soldier informed of changes in your friendships and activities. If you leave the area, stay in touch with your FRG and other military support resources.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: As much as possible, provide emotional support to your Spouse through letters, e-mail, phone calls, and other means of communication. Plan how you will do this before you deploy. Actively support your Spouse's plans to develop a strong support system.

Adding/Subtracting Family Roles

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Are removed from the daily lives of their families and miss family events (anniversaries, births, graduations, birthdays, sporting events, etc.).

At Home, Spouses: Will perform roles that might otherwise be shared.

Potential Concerns: Spouses might feel overwhelmed or unprepared for the additional roles that need to be taken on. Soldiers may feel left out.

Adding/Subtracting Family Roles

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Actions Spouses Can Take: Discuss with your Soldier all of the roles that you will assume before the deployment. Make the transition while your Soldier is still home.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Provide your Spouse with the necessary tools and resources (power(s) of attorney, account numbers and passwords, important documents, contact numbers, etc.), to perform all of the family's roles before you deploy.

Taking Control

B A **T** T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Soldiers can't be in control of what is going on at home.

At Home, Spouses: Are the head of the household.

Potential Concerns: Spouses may resent Soldiers' attempts to micromanage or completely detach from the household while deployed. Spouses and Soldiers may disagree on the details of the family's priorities. Conflicts may arise over how money is managed during the deployment.

Taking Control

B A **T** T L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Pace yourself and only take on essential tasks and responsibilities. Keep your Soldier up-to-date on any unplanned expenses that occur during the deployment.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Trust and encourage your Spouse to set priorities. Encourage and help your Spouse to do what they need to do to keep the family going. Understand that changes will likely occur. Don't micromanage the household while you are deployed.

Talking it Out

B A T **T** L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Work long hours, nearly every day, with very little downtime and many have limited access to phone or email.

At Home, Spouses: Are also only able to share a limited amount of what occurs during the deployment due to communication limitations.

Potential Concerns: Soldiers may not share their feelings or experiences while they are deployed because they do not want Spouses to worry. Also, they may not have time to fully engage in the conversation, or they are not ready to talk. Because communication is limited, the likelihood of rumors spreading increases.

Talking it Out

B A T **T** L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Talk with others about how the deployment is affecting you. Make sure your children have a chance to keep in touch with your Soldier as well. Be patient and understand that your Soldier may not share details of what he/she is going through or understand what you are experiencing. Consider keeping a journal.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Don't expect your Spouse to understand what it is like in a combat environment unless you share your experiences. Recognize that your Spouse and children will have a deployment story to share as well. Explain to your children why and for how long you will be gone.

Loyalty and Commitment

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Need to know their Spouses will remain committed and be there for them when they return.

At Home, Spouses: Need to know their Soldiers will be committed during the deployment.

Potential Concerns: Both Spouses and Soldiers may doubt how well they can handle being separated for such a long time. Also, Spouses and Soldiers may have concerns about mistrust, jealousy and commitment.

Loyalty and Commitment

B A T T **L** E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Tell your Soldier how much you miss him/her and how happy you will be when he/she is back. Find ways to stay connected; try poems, letters, tapes, gifts, videos, etc.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Tell your Spouse you love and appreciate her/him. Try to stay connected with your Spouse in any way you can. Be creative!

Emotional Balance

B A T T L **E** M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Are trained to control their emotions in order to be successful.

At Home, Spouses: Manage individual and family emotional well-being with less emotional support from Soldiers.

Potential Concerns: Soldiers may begin to detach from the family prior to deploying, which can lead Spouses and children to become anxious, angry, or worried about decreased emotional intimacy. Couples and children may argue more as the deployment nears. Soldiers may also seem distant during mid-tour leave.

Emotional Balance

B A T T L **E** M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Be patient. Emotional detachment can be common in Soldiers preparing for combat and during deployment (including mid-tour leave). Be aware that arguments often occur as families try to cope with a pending deployment.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Understand that you may be more easily frustrated or feel detached as the deployment nears. Stay as involved as possible with your family before you leave. Let your Spouse and children know that you care and are concerned about them while you are deployed.

Mental Health and Readiness

B A T T L E **M** I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Have experiences that may affect their mental health.

At Home, Spouses: Maintain individual and family mental well-being.

Potential Concerns: Spouses may experience difficulty adjusting to Soldiers being away, becoming anxious, depressed, or angry with their Soldier or the Army. Children may be depressed or upset about the deployment as well. Spouses and children may be concerned about how the deployment will be or is affecting their Soldier.

Mental Health and Readiness

B A T T L E **M** I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Recognize that you and your children may need mental health assistance to better cope with the deployment. Know what mental health resources are available for you and your family.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Monitor your own well-being. There are many ways to seek help while you are deployed, if it is needed, including unit chaplains, battalion aid stations, mental health professionals and Combat Stress Control (CSC) professionals.

Independence

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Make decisions that revolve around their deployment and are less available to participate in household decisions.

At Home, Spouses: Function alone or as a single parent by making household decisions with less input from Soldiers.

Potential Concerns: Some of the decisions that Spouses make may not be agreed upon by Soldiers. Spouses may be reluctant to make independent decisions during the deployment.

Independence

B A T T L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Seek your Soldier's input on major decisions, but be ready to make most decisions on your own.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Respect and appreciate your Spouse’s independence. It is essential for your Spouse to make decisions in your absence.

Navigating the Army System

BATTLEMIND

In Combat, Soldiers: Follow rules and regulations.

At Home, Spouses: Navigate the Army environment, using available resources, in order to better integrate into the military community.

Potential Concerns: Spouses may be angry and resentful for having to deal with a complicated, bureaucratic organization (TRICARE, DEERS, etc.). Perceived lack of information or help from Soldiers' units or military agencies may also cause frustration.

Navigating the Army System

BATTLEMIND

Actions Spouses Can Take: Learn the Army system by asking questions. Be patient, it takes time. Anticipate changes that will occur during the deployment (such as starting a new school) and know how to get through them without your Soldier's presence. Be prepared to solve many problems on your own.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Prepare your Spouse as much as possible prior to your deployment by sharing all information you have about Army services and making sure they have needed power(s) of attorney. Show your Spouse the local service locations. Help your Spouse navigate the system.

Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

B A T T L E M I N **D**

In Combat, Soldiers: Literally put their lives on the line for their fellow Soldiers in service of their country.

At Home, Spouses: Often sacrifice their own needs and desires (careers, educational goals, proximity to family and friends, etc.) by placing their needs last.

Potential Concerns: Spouses and Soldiers may feel that they are sacrificing a lot and they are not being fully appreciated.

Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

BATTLEMIND

Actions Spouses Can Take: Tell your Soldier that you appreciate his/her sacrifices and that you recognize that being a Soldier is difficult.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Be aware that you are not the only one making sacrifices. Show your Spouse how much you appreciate his/her hard work and encourage him/her to pursue his/her own interests.

Cues You Might Need Help

If any of the following are severe, persistent or interfere with your daily life:

- Feeling depressed and down
- Isolating yourself or withdrawing from important relationships
- Feeling angry, tense, hostile, irritable and/or resentful
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Significant appetite changes
- Not finding fun in things previously enjoyed
- Using over-the-counter medications, illegal drugs or alcohol to cope
- Taking out frustrations on others
- Suicidal or homicidal thinking, intent or actions
- Family, coworkers, or friends tell you that you need help

Cues Children Might Need Help

Look for *changes* in the child's normal behaviors and problems that persist:

- Irritability and problems controlling his/her temper
- Getting into fights, hitting, biting, and/or kicking
- Having problems paying attention or sitting still
- Withdrawing from friends and becoming a loner at school or home
- Being unhappy, sad or depressed
- Academic problems
- School personnel, friends, or others tell you that your child needs help

Mental and Behavioral Health Resources for Families

- Military Chaplain or Civilian Religious Personnel
- Mental/Behavioral Health Services
- Army/Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647

  or www.MilitaryOneSource.com
- Army Community Services (ACS)
- Social Work Services (SWS)
- Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
- Child Youth Services (CYS)
- New Parent Support Program (NPSP)
- School Counselor

Point of Contact and Disclaimer

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This presentation contains a combination of research findings and recommendations, many of which are based on personal observations and experiences. Therefore, the opinions and views expressed here are those of the Land Combat Study Team, and should not be considered representing the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.